

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SAM-01 SS-20 RSC-01

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R 250958Z FEB 74

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1418

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINR CH

SUBJ: CHAIRMAN MAO ON TELEVISION

1. FOR THE PAST TWO EVENINGS, PEKING TELEVISION HAS FEATURED A FILMCLIP OF CHAIRMAN MAO'S FEBRUARY 22 MEETING WITH ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT KENNETH KAUNDA. THE FOOTAGE IS INTERESTING FOR THE LIGHT IT SHEDS ON THE CHAIRMAN'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CONDITION.

2. THOUGH SHRUNKEN IN BODY AND SLOW OF MOVEMENT, THE CHAIRMAN APPEARS ALERT, STEADY ON HIS FEET, AND, ABOVE ALL, IN EXCELLENT HUMOR. GREETING MRS. KAUNDA, MAO ADMIRES HER BRACELETS. IN CONVERSATION WITH ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT, HE SMILES FREQUENTLY AND GESTURES BROADLY. AFTERWARDS, HE RISES UNAIDED FROM HIS CHAIR AND STANDS SMARTLY TO ATTENTION FOR A GROUP PHOTO. THE MOST ENGAGING SEQUENCE OCCURS AS KAUNDA, AT THE END OF INTERVIEW, PRESENTS TO MAO FIVE ZAMBIAN UNITED NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS, PART OF THE OFFICIAL PARTY. TWO OF THE FIVE ARE WOMEN AND WEAR AFRICAN DRESS. AS THE FIRST OF THEM TAKES THE CHAIRMAN'S HAND, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHE BENDS SMOOTHLY AT THE KNEE AND WAIST AND PERFORMS A

GRACEFUL CURTSY. MAO, MOMENTARILY NONPLUSSED, PAUSES FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN QUICKLY BOBS HIS HEAD AND AWKWARDLY DROPS HIS SHOULDERS IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SORT OF BOW OR CURTSY IN REPLY. THE ONLOOKERS SMILE SOMEWHAT NERVOUSLY AT THIS, BUT WHEN THE SECOND YOUNG WOMAN REPEATS THE OBEISANCE, MAO IS READY. LOOKING AROUND WITH A BROAD GRIN, HE EXECUTES A STIFF BUT CLEARLY RECOGNIZABLE -- AND QUITE COMIC -- IMITATION OF HER GESTURE. THIS TIME EVERYONE BREAKS UP. CHAIRMAN APPEARS VERY PLEASED WITH HIMSELF. WHEN LAST SEEN, MAO IS STANDING IN HIS STUDY WAVING GOODBYE BY WAGGING THE FINGERS OF HIS CUPPED HAND. HE IS STILL GRINNING.

3. CHOU EN-LAI AND WANG HUNG-WEN GET GOOD PLAY IN FILMCLIP AS WELL. BOTH ARE INVOLVED IN GREETING THE VISITORS ON THE SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF MAO'S RESIDENCE AND ESCORTING THEM IN. WANG IN PARTICULAR LOOKS MORE RELAXED THAN ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS.

4. COMMENT: WHETHER MAO'S CLOWNING HAS AN ELEMENT OF SENILITY IN IT OR MERELY INDICATES POSITIVE REACTION TO THE EXOTIC AND ATTRACTIVE ZAMBIANS IS HARD TO SAY. HONG KONG MAY WISH TO PICK THIS PIECE UP FROM CANTON TELEVISION AND JUDGE FOR THEMSELVES.
JENKINS

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